

## Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01    SECTO 12121 141152Z  
ACTION NODS-00

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 /001 W  
-----038090 141157Z /12  
O 140945Z DEC 77  
FM USDEL SECRETARY AIRCRAFT  
TO AMEMBASSY CAIRO IMMEDIATE  
INFO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE

S E C R E T SECTO 12121

NODIS

HANDLE AS NODIS CHEROKEE

EOO.11652: XGDS-2  
TAGS: OVIP (VANCE, CYRUS R.), EG  
SUBJECT: REPORT ON SECRETARY'S MEETING WITH PRESIDENT ASSAD,  
DECEMBER 13, 1977

WHITE HOUSE FOR BRZEZINSKI  
CAIRO FOR EILTS AND ATHERTON FROM SECRETARY

1. I MET LATE TUESDAY AFTERNOON FOR TWO HOURS WITH FOREIGN MINISTER KHADDAM, FOLLOWED BY ANOTHER TWO HOURS WITH PRESIDENT ASSAD. ALTHOUGH THE SYRIANS DISAGREE PROFOUNDLY WITH SADAT'S POLICY AND OUR SUPPORT OF IT, THE TONE OF THE MEETINGS, ESPECIALLY THAT WITH ASSAD, WAS QUITE POSITIVE.
  2. I BEGAN BY RESTATING OUR COMMITMENT TO A COMPREHENSIVE PEACE AND THE RECONVENING OF THE GENEVA CONFERENCE. I EXPLAINED THAT WE SUPPORTED THE CAIRO MEETING AS PART OF A PROCESS THAT WE HOPED WOULD ADVANCE THE CAUSE OF PEACE. I THEN REVIEWED THE RESULTS OF MY TRIP TO DATE, EMPHASIZING SADAT'S COMMITMENT TO AN OVERALL PEACE AND HIS INSISTENCE THAT ISRAEL SHOULD MAKE A PUBLIC STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLE ON WITHDRAWAL FROM ALL
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OCCUPIED TERRITORIES AND ON READINESS TO RESOLVE THE PALESTINIAN QUESTION. I SPOKE AT SOME LENGTH ABOUT THE IMPACT OF SADAT'S INITIATIVE ON ATTITUDES IN ISRAEL, THE U.S. AND WESTERN EUROPE. ASSAD SHOWED CONSIDERABLE INTEREST IN THE ATMOSPHERE IN ISRAEL. ASKING MANY QUESTIONS ABOUT INDICATIONS OF CHANGES IN THINKING. I TOLD HIM THAT THERE HAS BEEN A FUNDAMENTAL CHANGE IN

ISRAELI ATTITUDES AT ALL LEVELS AND THAT THE ISRAELI LEADERSHIP AND PUBLIC BOTH SEEMED TO BE AWARE OF THE NEED TO COME TO GRIPS WITH THE KEY ISSUES AND TO TAKE A STEP WHICH WOULD BE A SERIOUS RESPONSE TO SADAT'S DECISION.

3. IN THE COURSE OF LENGTHY DISCUSSION OF THEIR OWN VIEWS, ASSAD AND KHADDAM WERE BOTH CRITICAL OF THE SADAT TRIP TO ISRAEL BECAUSE IT HAD DISRUPTED THE "EQUILIBRIUM OF FORCES" IN THE AREA, HAD IN THEIR OPINION WEAKENED THE ARAB POSITION, AND HAD THUS MADE GENEVA IMPOSSIBLE UNTIL A "NEW EQUILIBRIUM" WAS FOUND. AS ASSAD DESCRIBED THE SITUATION, IN THE PAST THE ARABS HAD BEEN UNITED AGAINST ISRAEL. NOW ONE OF THE KEY ARAB COUNTRIES HAS "JOINED THE OTHER SIDE."

4. ASSAD WAS CAREFUL NOT TO ATTACK SADAT PERSONNALLY, ALTHOUGH HE WAS HIGHLY CRITICAL OF HIS ACTIONS. BOTH HE AND KHADDAM STRESSED THAT SYRIA IS STILL COMMITTED TO THE GOAL OF PEACE, BUT THE SITUATION HAD CHANGED AND THE CAIRO MEETING WOULD SERVE NO PURPOSE. ASSAD IS WORRIED BY THE PROSPECT OF A BILATERAL EGYPTIAN-ISRAELI AGREEMENT. HE DOUBTS THAT BEGIN WILL REALLY TAKE THE HARD DECISIONS THAT SADAT IS DEMANDING OF HIM. THIS SKEPTICISM--ALONG WITH DOUBTS ABOUT OUR ABILITY TO "DELIVER"--GOES FAR TO EXPLAIN HIS DISTRESS OVER SADAT'S INITIATIVE. HE BELIEVES SADAT HAS GIVEN A GREAT DEAL WITH LITTLE LIKELIHOOD OF GETTING MUCH IN RETURN.

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HE SEEMS TO IMPLY THAT IF THE ISRAELIS WERE TO CHANGE THEIR POSITIONS ON TERRITORY, THE PALESTINIANS, AND JERUSALEM, THEN THE PEACE PROCESS MIGHT OPEN UP AGAIN. BUT HE IS SKEPTICAL THAT THIS WILL HAPPEN, AND THUS PREFERS THE RELATIVE COMFORT OF SITTING ON THE SIDELINES UNTIL THE PICTURE CLEARS.

5. ASSAD WAS VERY CLEAR IN STATING HIS DESIRE TO MAINTAIN A GOOD WORKING RELATIONSHIP WITH THE U.S. WE WILL STAY IN CONTACT WITH HIM.

6. AMBASSADOR WHOULD BRIEF SADAT DRAWING ON THE ABOVE AS YOU THINK APPROPRIATE.

7. FOR THERTON: I OFFERED KHADDAM AND ASSAD TO KEEP THEM ABREAST OF THE CAIRO MEETINGS. THEY DID NOT SNAP UP MY OFFER, BUT I THINK WE SHOULD PUT DICK MURPHY IN A POSITION TO PROVIDE PERIODIC BRIEFINGS. WOULD YOU PLEASE (A) REPEAT ALL YOUR REGULAR REPORTS TO DAMASCUS AS WELL AS TO TEL AVIV, JIDDA AND AMMAN AND (B) POINT OUT IF THERE IS ANYTHING THAT CANNOT BE PASSED TO THE SYRIANS.

VANCE

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## Message Attributes

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